

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 1922.

## The German Frauleins and the Marriage Brokers



At left is the haughty Junker type of aristocratic officer no longer considered a desirable husband: Note his wife walking one pace behind him.



The rush to the marriage brokers in Berlin is unprecedented. Not all the women clients are middleaged spinsters. Most of them are young and attractive and widows, too, seek new mates.



At right the husband sought by frauleins to-day—a keen, not too old, business man capable of providing a good home and conserving family income.

Special Correspondence to THE NEW YORK HERALD.  
Copyright, 1922, by THE NEW YORK HERALD.  
New York Herald Bureau, Berlin, March 1.

By DR. EDWARD J. BING.

MARRIAGE brokers are doing a thriving business in Germany. The important role being played by marriage agents, to whose services thousands of people take recourse, is one of the characteristic features of social life in Berlin and the other cities of Germany. It is accentuatingly interesting that those who seek the literal marriage marts are not, as may be supposed to the contrary, representative of the poorer classes. The clientele of the marriage brokers now consists almost exclusively of members of the aristocracy, the landed gentry and the families which grew into aristocracy before the war by means of industrial power.

Curiously, the war profiteers and the *nouveaux riches* on the one hand, and the plebeian folk on the other do not seem to find the need to avail themselves of the matrimonial markets. They seem to be able to manage for themselves. Thus the new spirit in Germany becomes apparent in the field of matrimony also. National, racial and social prejudices have received a severe blow from republican ideas which, while welcome to those formerly oppressed, is replaced in the mind of a part of the once privileged classes by a spirit of resignation. A remarkable fact is the considerable number of marriages between German women and Americans—both German-Americans and full Americans. Even Franco-German marriages are frequent, while the marriage offer of a central African native chief is "favorably considered" by a German lady who hails from old military stock.

#### Owner of a Big Agency Tells of Growing Business

These and other characteristic facts were mentioned and explained to me by Mrs. Lehmann, the owner of one of Berlin's best known marriage agencies.

"We are extremely busy," she said. "Through my efforts 168 marriages were concluded last year, while we scored about 200 weddings in 1920. Forty-eight of my clients celebrated their betrothal last Christmas."

"We get about a hundred letters a week from Germany and abroad, and the preference of foreigners for German wives is remarkable. Our mail contains letters from would-be husbands in North and South America, Asia, Africa and practically every country in Europe, including England, France and Poland. Only part of these men are or have been German; at least half of them are natives of their respective countries."

"It seems that the German woman has a good reputation abroad. She is a good housewife and mother. The economic situation in Germany makes it very difficult for the average woman to find an ideal husband in the Fatherland. This accounts for the fact that a very great number of our women are interested in getting married to foreigners. Nationality has ceased to

be an obstacle. It is immaterial whether they are former enemies or not. In fact, preference is given to Americans. Only Dutchmen are rather unpopular among our ladies, who consider them too coarse."

"About 50 per cent. of the women ready to get married abroad are members of the aristocracy, although practically none of their future husbands belong to their own social class. In justice to our women I must say, however, that their attitude is not, as might be supposed, inspired by materialistic motives."

"It goes without saying that they want husbands of assured circumstances, but a good character and education and corresponding manners are considered indispensable. Their attitude is the same in regard to German husbands, and even aristocratic women of wealth are perfectly willing to marry gentlemen of the middle class if only they are fit to become good and thoughtful husbands."

#### Not Young Girls Yearning,

##### But More Thoughtful Ones

"The prolonged absence of so many men from their families during the war has had the result that most women now explicitly ask for thoughtful husbands. It is also characteristic that the greater part of those who intend to get married abroad are not young girls yearning for romance, but mature and sensible women who know life."

"The change in social ideas is particularly conspicuous. Where are the times when my clients used to lay particular stress upon getting a husband whose name should be adorned by at least the syllable 'von'?"

"Poor people cannot use the services of marriage agents because this procedure is too expensive. On the other hand, the new rich do not need our services, because with the present high cost of living in Germany it is they, and they only, who give big parties and private balls where young people get acquainted. Our clients are the aristocracy and their families of high officials who cannot now afford to indulge in an expensive social life, and also the wealthy old families who own land or industries and live in the provinces where, by the force of circumstances, they have little social intercourse."

The exception which confirms the rule was also provided by a letter I was shown. Its author is a postman, who, in a both amusing and touching human document composed with as much enthusiasm as bad spelling and grammar, writes:

"My peace has left me. I want to marry a girl about eighteen to twenty-two years old. I do not mind if she belongs to the nobility, if only I can get along well with her. She may also be a rich American girl; I have no prejudice against that nation. There may be rich girls, after all, who wish to get acquainted with a poor man. Now, it is true that I am not very well acquainted with superior education, but everything can be acquired in time. I should like to be able to travel and go to the theaters, but I do not possess the means to enjoy life fully. It is an old desire of mine to marry a good looking, smartly dressed and rich girl."

People who use the services of a marriage agent here are required to make a small advance payment to cover the expenses of correspondence, &c. The usual

fee asked by agents is 2 per cent. of the bride's cash property, no matter whether it was the husband or the wife who solicited the services of the agent. The same principle is applied in regard to fees even when the husband is much wealthier than the wife. In this case, however, the former is expected, but not required, to pay a fee to the matchmaker.

It is curious that German law does not protect the interests of marriage agents. They are not entitled to sue a client for the payment of their fees, and it is said to happen pretty often that the happily married couple forgets all about the agent's claims, while the latter is deprived of the protection of the law.

"Our expenses have increased twenty times since 1914, and yet our business has never flourished like this. Our correspondence amounts to about a hundred letters a day," another Berlin agent, who may be considered the busiest and "classiest" in Central Europe, told me. "I do not believe in marriages through advertising. Advertisements of this kind often lead to great disappointment, let alone the fact that many unscrupulous people are merely looking out for adventures and use these advertisements to obtain their ends. Besides, a private party cannot make such careful and systematic inquiries about the person who figures as a marriage candidate as a professional agent who has both the practice and the responsibility. Professional matchmaking offers much more of a guarantee to the parties concerned."

#### Saxony Starts an Agency

##### To Promote Marriages

"The State of Saxony has already organized official marriage agencies, and it is likely that this institution will spread over the rest of Germany. This is to be hoped, anyway, because it would be particularly useful to the poorer classes. Besides, Government marriage agencies are of no disadvantage to the private agents. The social class which forms our clientele will not make use of the services of these official institutions."

My informant confirmed the marked tendency among the eligible women of Germany to get married abroad. Of 100 women married through the efforts of an agent, about ten marry foreigners and about twenty Berliners. Roughly, seventy out of a hundred find a home in the German provinces and as many come from there themselves, and a considerable number of people who live in formerly German territory which has become French, Belgian or Polish under the peace treaty are anxious to marry a daughter of the lost Fatherland.

As to the age and appearance of women who take recourse to the agent's services I must admit that I had been under the influence of erroneous ideas. I had heard so many anecdotes about ugly old maidens looking for a husband. I remembered the unfortunate bachelor who was introduced by a marriage agent to a wealthy and exceptionally plain looking woman, and who, upon his complaint to the agent that the lady had freckles and a hunchback and was lame, received the consoling reply: "You can safely talk aloud. She is deaf, too."

My surprise was therefore genuine when by the courtesy of the agent I saw some photographs of female "marriage candidates." My eyes rested on the portrait of a charming, exquisitely dressed young lady.

"The only child of the owner of one of our biggest banks," was the comment.

"Her parents are looking out for a serious young man of good family. He must be a graduate of law and able to take charge of the bank one day." My eager question whether there were already any suitable candidates for this marriage, was misunderstood. "There are three already, but I can put you on the waiting list," was the reply.

Another photograph shows a slender, well built young lady with beautiful features, standing in front of what looks like a garden door of a gorgeous country home. She is 23 years old and the daughter of a wealthy landowner. Another very handsome lady, Countess N., about 20 years old, is the heiress of a huge property which is famous for its wine production. She would prefer getting married to a member of the aristocracy, but makes no condition of it. Her future husband is expected to be able to run the property and the extensive wine export business.

A fair haired, beautiful young girl in riding breeches, who resembles Mary Pickford, is looking out for a Douglas Fairbanks. She is the daughter of a wealthy farmer of German extraction, who lives in the Argentine, and wants a German husband of university education, with a knowledge of agriculture.

Several ladies whose photographs I saw are neither beautiful nor plain. Not a single one is ugly, as far as I could make out from the portraits. There were several of exceptional beauty. Most of them are wealthy, but there was a couple of girls from Vienna whose only dowry is their charm.

"We are particularly happy," the agent declared, "whenever we find a good match for a poor girl of good family."

#### Officers and Aristocrats

##### Not Thought Desirable

On the whole, male candidates are now judged by German women upon their personal merits. Officers and ex-officers are not wanted, and aristocrats have but a small chance of being elected for their title's sake. Importance is attached to the future husband's character and manners, and almost in every instance he is required to possess business ability. On the other hand, men looking out for fiancées are not so materialistic as might be expected, now that the outcome of the war has upset economic life and social traditions. There are, of course, many who expect their wife to bring capital into their business. But most of the seekers are chiefly bent on marrying a good housewife and mother. Sense and knowledge of art and music are often required.

The planless and lonely life led by so many million men during four years of war have aroused in them a longing for a comfortable home and this is their first and foremost consideration in choosing a wife. War widows who intend to marry again cannot, however, help attaching im-

portance to the financial condition of their husband elect. For, according to the law, a war widow loses her pension on marrying a second time. Nevertheless, many German marriage candidates prefer widows to girls, and the number of widows who get married again is constantly increasing and considerably reducing the girls' chances.

Of a thousand marriages in Germany in 1914 fifty-two were widows, while the number of the latter grew to over 100 out of a thousand, or 10 per cent. of all women married in 1918-19. The Berliner explains this fact by the term "furnished widows." This expression refers to the fact that most of the widows, and especially war widows, already possess a furnished home, which is now a great temptation to thousands of bachelors. In fact, the difficulties of the housing question are enormous, and it is almost impossible to find suitable apartments, either furnished or unfurnished. Thus the German widow is a most dangerous rival of her maiden sisters. Out of a thousand young girls in Germany, 908 got married in 1914, while in 1918 their number decreased to 856.

Economic conditions here have brought about a considerable decline in the number of marriages, and it has become clear that the marriage wave which swept over the country after the armistice was simply and only due to the fact that many thousands of marriages which were postponed owing to war conditions, were concluded as soon as the state of peace had returned. The number of marriages in Greater Berlin in 1914 was 38,819; in 1915, 27,661; in 1916, 24,185; in 1917, 25,583; in 1918, 29,111; in 1919, 51,892, and in 1920, 53,691. While during the first quarter of 1921 Germany, with the exception of Württemberg, Mecklenburg and the Prussian part of the Sarre territory, recorded 153,312 marriages; 193,855 took place in the second quarter.

This does not mean an increase, but a noteworthy decrease of marriages, because there are always considerably more in the spring than in the preceding three months. Measured by normal peace standards, there should have been 220,000 marriages in the second quarter of 1921. Their number has, therefore, gone back by more than 10 per cent.

#### Surplus of Women Grows Until Total Is 15,000,000

The situation is aggravated by the general after effects of the war. The surplus of women of the ten principal nations which took part in the war is now estimated at 15,000,000, as against 4,000,000 in 1914. In Germany there are now 1,180 eligible women to every thousand men, while the proportion in Austria is 1,230 to the thousand. Before the war every twentieth woman had to renounce marriage, owing to the shortage of men; now every seventh remains without a husband.

German sociologists therefore urge energetic measures for the protection of babies, particularly of baby boys. It is pointed out that, according to birth statistics, there are 106 births of boys to every hundred births of girls. Yet, even in times of peace, there was always a considerable surplus of women in almost every country. Countries with a sober and intelligent

peasant population and wholesome climatic and food conditions, like Bulgaria, have no such surplus, because the simple and wholesome life is a great preserver of babies.

It is again and again emphasized in the German press that, while Germany possesses excellent institutions for the protection of children and poor mothers, measures must be taken for the particular protection of baby boys and a careful physical and moral education should be extended to them.

The difficult economic situation in Germany is also responsible for the growing habit among the population of artificially restricting the number of children. Measures are now advocated which are to encourage married people to refrain from this practice, which is both new and detrimental to Germany. The number of births in this country during the second quarter of last year was about 400,000. On the other hand, the death rate here is now below the normal, i. e., pre-war, figure. Many Germans ascribe this to the privations of the four years' blockade, which did away with many who otherwise would have died now.

#### Woman Sociologist

##### Fears for Birth Rate

Frau Wilhelmine Mohr, a sociologist of reputation, declares that if the birth rate is to be raised, the present system of marriage must be changed.

"Men marry too late and women too early in Germany," she says. "The men began too soon to work in the treadmill of life. They have earned honor, fortune and social standing at the expense of considerable physical and mental energy, before they become fathers."

According to Frau Mohr, this state of affairs would be very much improved by a more general partaking of women in all professions and business lines. In this case women will marry later, but not too late, because it is proved that the height of maternity is reached only at a more mature age. Besides, by the contribution of women to the livelihood of their family, men will be in a position to marry early, while still in the prime of physical and mental energy. Frau Mohr concludes:

"The first creative deed of man, who is the creator of states, ought to be the maintenance of his natural numerical superiority over the woman."

The marriage problem is one of those in the focus of public interest in Germany. Never has there been so much talk about marriage before. It is one of the favorite topics at social gatherings. Bachelors and married men, mothers and daughters, are in the throes of heated discussion about it. It is impossible to eat a couple of sandwiches peacefully at a Berlin evening party without replying several times to the typical question: "Are you married, and if not, why not?"

It is at such moments that one realizes the significance in German life of social problems in general and of the question of marriage in particular. In fact, it is by far more characteristic and illustrative of the life of this country than many a political or economic phenomenon, which easily misleads the visitor to Germany by absorbing his entire attention.